

**Montana Department of Military Affairs
Disaster & Emergency Services Division
State Emergency Coordination Center**

1900 Williams Street - P.O. Box 4789

Helena, MT 59604-4789

Telephone: (406) 841-3911

Fax: (406) 841-3965

Situation Report for August 9, 2003 (issued @ 14:00 hrs.)

Wildfires of 2003

Attention * - New information shown in today's report displayed in ***Bold Italics*** type.

I. Montana Fire Conditions and Background Information:

Initial Attack Activity has been considered very successful throughout the Northern Rockies during the 2003 Fire Season. There were 155 new starts on Wednesday with only 18 unable to be controlled. During the Past 3 days there have been more than 300 new fires starts and initial attacks.

Due to storms moving through Montana over the next few days, new starts are expected to occur. A season ending weather event is not predicted to occur until the end of September or first part of October. A vigilant fire watch is expected to continue as a result of these predictions.

Current concerns include the continued management of fires within the Flathead Area Command as well as the Slims and Black Frog Complex fires. In addition, the Deep Fire, located near I-15 a few miles south of the Montana state line on the Idaho/Montana border, reached 23,000 acres last night due to gusty winds that continue to push it through grass, sagebrush, and pockets of timber. Authorities in Montana continue to track its progress.

II. Current Montana Fire Situation: (as reported to NRCC *August 8, 2003 (2130)*)

A. Large Fires

Date: August 8, 2003 (2115)

Northern Rockies Preparedness Level = 5

National Preparedness Level = 4

- **Flathead Area Command (Mann) is managing the large fires on the Flathead National Forest, Kootenai National Forest and Glacier National Park.**
 - **Wedge Canyon – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Bennett), 25,723 acres, 65% contained, 20 miles E of Eureka, Montana.**
 - **Robert – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Ferguson), 23,950 acres, 58% contained, 8 miles N of Columbia Falls, Montana.**
 - **Trapper Creek Complex – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Raley). Complex is 20,540 acres, 60% contained. This Complex is made up of the Trapper Creek (15,910 acres – 60% contained), Paul Bunyan (300 acres – 100% contained), Wolf Gun (4,330 acres – 55% contained) and Trout (1/4 acre – 100% contained) fires located 45 statute miles NE of Kalispell,**

Montana.

- **Little Salmon Creek Complex – Fire Use Management Team (Rath) assumed command today. This 14,300 acre lightning caused Wildland Fire Use complex is located 47 miles SE of Kalispell, Montana in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. This complex, made up of the Pagoda (125 acres) and the Little Salmon (14,175 acres), is being managed to accomplish resource objectives.**
- **Cherry Creek – Type 2 Incident Management Team (Swope) – 170 acres, 12 miles SE of Thompson Falls, MT.**
- **Cottonwood – 200 acres, 90% contained, 12 miles SW of Roundup, Montana. Slims – Type 1 Incident Management Team (Mortier), 9,100 acres, 50% contained, 35 nautical miles E of Grangeville, Idaho.**
- **Black Frog Complex – 97 % contained. This Complex is made up of the Blackwall fire (4,515 acres), located 32 miles N of Salmon, Idaho and Frog Pond (2,082 acres), as well as numerous concentrations of spots on both fires for a total of 7,275 acres located 34 miles S of Hamilton, Montana.**

Reported Major Fire Activity: *Report Date: August 9th, 2003*

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Wedge Canyon:</i> | <i>Estimated Cost:</i> | <i>\$16,300,000</i> | <i>% contained: 65%</i> |
| <i>Roberts Fire:</i> | <i>Estimated Cost:</i> | <i>\$10,900,000</i> | <i>% contained: 58%</i> |
| <i>Trapper Creek Complex:</i> | <i>Estimated Cost:</i> | <i>\$2,800,000</i> | <i>% contained: 60%</i> |
| <i>Little Salmon Complex:</i> | <i>Estimated Cost:</i> | <i>\$619,000</i> | <i>% contained: NR%</i> |
| <i>Black Frog Complex:</i> | <i>Estimated Cost:</i> | <i>\$9,412,000</i> | <i>% contained: 97%</i> |
| <i>Cherry Creek</i> | <i>Estimated Cost:</i> | <i>\$120,000</i> | <i>% contained: 0%</i> |
| <i>Cottonwood</i> | <i>Estimated Cost:</i> | <i>\$50,000</i> | <i>% contained: 90%</i> |

B. Initial Attack *Moderate initial attack – 83 new fires for 557 acres*

- More new fires are expected as sleepers from recent lightning strikes show up as temperatures rise. Three fires are being tracked in initial attack.
- The crews working near Round Up on the Cottonwood Fire estimated the fire at 200 acres. Crews have contained the fire and are expected to hold it.
- The Finigan Mountain Fire is on the west side of Interstate 15 between Great Falls and Wolf Creek, Montana. The fire is burning in open ponderosa pine and grass, steep terrain. Tanker drops and bucket work are being used.
- The Willow Mountain fire is located northeast of Helena within the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness on the Helena National Forest. Air tankers were being used and smokejumpers were requested but could not jump due to high winds.
- The Nez Perce National Forest reported a 5 – 10 acre fire near Lost Horse Pass.

C. State Forecast For Montana

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE GREAT FALLS MT
430 AM MDT SAT AUG 9 2003***

WEST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

Today - Partly Cloudy. Isolated Showers And Thunderstorms. Highs 86 To 96.

*Tonight - Partly Cloudy. Isolated Showers And Thunderstorms. Lows 48 To 58.
Sunday - Partly Cloudy. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms. Highs 89 To 99.*

CENTRAL MONTANA

Today - Partly Cloudy. Isolated Showers And Thunderstorms. Highs In The Lower 80s To Lower 90s.

Tonight - Partly Cloudy. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms With Gusty Winds. Lows In The Lower 50s To Lower 60s.

Sunday - Partly Cloudy. Highs In The Lower 80s To Lower 90s.

SOUTHWEST MONTANA

Today - Mostly Sunny. Becoming Partly Cloudy With Isolated Showers And Thunderstorms In The Afternoon. Highs In The Mid 70s To Mid 80s.

Tonight - Partly Cloudy In The Evening Then Clearing. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms With Gusty Winds. Lows In The Mid 40s To Lower 50s.

Sunday - Partly Cloudy. Slight Chance Of Showers And Thunderstorms In The Afternoon. Highs In The Mid 70s To Upper 80s.

EASTERN AND SOUTHERN MONTANA

Today - Partly Cloudy. A Chance Of Thunderstorms East This Morning. Then A Chance Of Thunderstorms Except Extreme East This Afternoon. Highs In The Mid 80s Northeast To The 90s Elsewhere.

Tonight - Partly Cloudy. A Chance Of Thunderstorms Mainly During The Evening. Chance Of Thunderstorms. Lows In The 50s West...With 60s Elsewhere.

Sunday - Partly Cloudy. A Chance Of Thunderstorms In The Mountains. Highs Mainly In The 90s.

III. - Summary of Actions being taken by Local Government Officials:

Local government resources from various jurisdictions have been actively engaged in fire fighting efforts, particularly during the past several days. The evacuation of residents whose properties have been threatened have been conducted as required.

| <u>Local Emergency and Disaster Declarations</u> | | <u>Date Filed</u> |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cascade County | Emergency Declaration (Box Canyon/Long Mtn.) | 7/15/03 |
| Garfield County | Disaster Declaration (Missouri Breaks) | 7/15/03 |
| Beaverhead County | Emergency Resolution (multiple fires) | 7/17/03 |
| Ravalli County | Emergency Declaration (Big Creek) | 7/20/03 |
| Flathead County | Emergency Declaration (Wedge Canyon) | 7/21/03 |
| Sanders County | Resolution (Stage II Fire Restrictions) | 7/29/03 |
| Fallon County | Resolution (Stage I Fire Restrictions) | 8/04/03 |
| CSKT Flathead | Resolution (Tribal/Forest/Range Closure) | 8/04/03 |
| Blaine County | Emergency Declaration (150 acre fire) | 8/06/03 |

IV. - Summary of State Activities and Resources Committed:

State, Local and Tribal Declarations:

On 8/07/03, Governor Judy Martz signed Executive Order (# 16-03) in which she declared a statewide disaster thereby enabling mobilization of state resources

(including the Montana National Guard) should they be needed to help protect the life, health and/or property of Montana's citizens. This declaration supplements Executive Order # 14-03, a statewide emergency declaration issued on 7/18/03.

The Flathead County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution on August 4th, 2003 stating that because the weather forecasts indicated no relief from the dry conditions and fires continued in the county it was "resolved that stage II fire restrictions on all State forested lands and all private forested lands open to the public" will be in effect until otherwise stated.

FEMA Declarations:

FEMA Fire Management Assistance Declaration approved on July 23rd, 2003 for Missouri Breaks Complex fire.

FEMA Fire Management Assistance Declaration approved on July 25th, 2003 for Flathead County's Wedge Canyon and Roberts fires.

Requests for State Assistance:

- The Montana National Guard is assisting "initial attack" fire suppression operations by supplying 3 UH-60 (Blackhawk) Helicopters modules and one UH-1 Helicopter module and approximately 45 soldiers. One Blackhawk helicopter module is currently assigned to the Flathead Interagency Dispatch Center, another is assigned to the Helena Interagency Dispatch Center, and the third is assigned to Missoula. The UH-1 helicopter module is currently deployed to Billings. The Montana National Guard Personnel Resources currently allocated to wild land fire suppression duties stands at 45. The National Guard will be rotating in new air crews in Helena and Kalispell this weekend.
- One NG Liaison Officer has been assigned to the Northern Rockies Coordination Center (NGCC) in Missoula.
- MT Highway Patrol and MT Department of Transportation are supporting fire efforts with local jurisdictions and fire management to limit travel disturbances.

Status of State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC)

- Montana DES is providing support to local governments through the State Emergency Coordination Center in Helena. The SECC is currently operating at Activation Level III. Level III operations include a full staff 0800-1700 during weekdays with a duty officer on call after hours. Weekend operations will be staffed at Level II from 0800-1700 unless it becomes necessary to advance to a higher activation level.

The State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC) will continue to monitor conditions and is prepared to provide 24-hour incident support to local governments. After office hours (i.e., 1700-0700) support is available through the DES Duty Officer who may be reached at (406) 841-3911.

Addendums to Situation Report

As of: **August 9th, 2003**

General Fire Information and Severity to Date

- Plum Creek has closed all private and public use on their holdings, logging operations are also shut down
- Currently there are no overnight facilities at Apgar or West Glacier.
- Large Season ending storm not expected until mid-September or early October.
- Closures are likely to remain in effect for the remainder of the season.
- General Cost for fires under Northern Rockies Coordination and acreage total [from Northern Rockies Priorities List -acreage estimate on active fires]:
- Interagency Dispatch requested a winch capable helicopter for the retrieval of an injured smokejumper on an initial attack mission in the Gates of the Mountains wilderness area near the Willow Peak fire.
- Cost: \$42.8 million Acreage: 107,192

Fire Restrictions and Closures

| <u>Zone</u> | <u>Restrictions</u> | <u>Effective Date</u> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Northwestern Zone | Stage II Restrictions | July 28, 2003 |
| Southwestern Zone | Stage II Restrictions | July 28, 2003 |
| Central Montana Zone | Stage II Restrictions | July 28, 2003 |
| South Central Zone | Stage II Restrictions | July 28, 2003 |
| Eastern Montana Zone | | |
| <u>Stage I Restrictions</u> (Billings) | | July 18, 2003 |
| <u>Stage II Restrictions</u> | | |
| State & Private: Carbon, Stillwater, Treasure, Sweet Grass, Mussellshell | | July 25, 2003 |
| Federal: Carbon, Stillwater, Treasure, Sweet Grass, Mussellshell | | July 18, 2003 |
| <u>Stage I Restrictions</u> (Lewistown) | | July 21, 2003 |
| <u>Stage II Restrictions</u> | | |
| State & Private: Hill, Chouteau, Judith Basin, Petroleum, Blaine, Phillips, Valley, Roosevelt, Sheridan, Fergus, Golden Valley, Daniels | | July 21, 2003 |
| Federal: Chouteau, Fergus, Judith Basin, Wheatland | | July 25, 2003 |
| <u>Stage I Restrictions</u> (Miles City) | | August 04, 2003 |
| State & Private: Richland, Dawson, Wibaux, Prairie, Fallon, McCone, Garfield, Custer, Powder River, Carter, and Rosebud | | |
| Federal: Richland, Dawson, Wibaux, Prairie, Fallon, McCone, Garfield, Custer, Powder River, Carter, and Rosebud counties | | |

Road Closures: Information is current as of 08-08-03

Southwest

The Foothills and Gibbonsville roads, west of Wisdom, in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest are now open. The Gibbonsville road will not be open in Idaho, in the Salmon-Challis National Forest, for the time being. Several roads and trails in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest will stay closed while fire-fighting operations continue. Still closed are all trails between the Gibbonsville road and Highway 43, trailheads at Cabinet and Richardson creeks, the Anderson Mountain road, and the May Creek campground. Fire fighters are still doing mop-up and helicopters are busy in this area, making it unsafe to open for the public just yet

Northwest

More than 75% of Glacier National Park is OPEN. Access is available by U.S. Highways 2, 49, 89, and the

historic Going to the Sun Road from St. Mary to Logan Pass. The Inside North Fork Road (north and south of Polebridge) is open from Fish Creek to Big Prairie, just north of Polebridge, but is closed from Big Prairie north. The Going-to-the-Sun Road is open from Avalanche to Logan Pass between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. only. No stopping is allowed from Avalanche to Logan Pass. 24-hour travel on the Going-to-the-Sun Road is permitted between St. Mary and Logan Pass only. Apgar Village in the Lake McDonald Valley, Many Glacier, St. Mary, Two Medicine, Goat Haunt, and the backcountry area of the Belly River are open. Due to the Wedge Canyon Fire, The North Fork area of Glacier National Park is closed to visitor use at this time.

Web Links:

Glacier National Park Fire Management:

<http://www.nps.gov/glac/resources/fires.htm>

Northern Rockies Interagency Information Center

<http://fs.fed.us/r1/fire/2003fires/index.htm>